

VICTORY CORPS AT WAR

1st Armored Division

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Iron sharpens iron as one 'Iron Soldier' sharpens another."
*Col. Robert E. Scurlock Jr., commander of the
2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division*

The "Iron Soldiers" of the 1st Armored Division were tempered in combat almost immediately after the division was activated at Fort Knox, Kentucky on July 15, 1940, as the "Old Ironsides" division rolled onto the battlefields of World War II. Sixty-six years later, thousands of division Soldiers continue holding fast in a faraway land in defense of America.

Operation Iraqi Freedom 2006 was a year of stunning adaptation, change, success and sadness as the division's 1st and 2nd Brigade Combat Teams, joined by "Big Red One" troops of the 2nd BCT of the 1st Infantry Division who deployed under Old Ironsides command and Soldiers of the 501st Military Police Company and 501st Military Intelligence Battalion



battled to bring America one step closer to winning the global war on terror and help Iraq stand on its own. The 1st Armored Division's 2nd BCT was first to move out, designated as a 'call forward force' that would remain at Camp Buehring, Kuwait until it was needed. Upon its arrival in Kuwait in November 2005, the brigade began training aggressively to be as ready as possible should the call come to move into Iraq. Commanders developed and executed intensive training on the division's full spectrum of weapons; to counter the deadly threat of improvised explosive

devices, and on combat operations in volatile and unstable urban environments. That extensive training in the desert heat of Kuwait gave 2nd BCT troops a fighting edge that allowed the BCT troops to deploy in support of Task Force 2nd Battalion 6th Infantry in March 2006 to provide the security support during Iraqi elections in Baghdad.

In May 2006, Task Force 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry and Task Force 1st Battalion, 35th Armor linked up with their 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division comrades to help secure the volatile city of Ramadi. By July 2006, the 2nd BCT had committed all three of its maneuver task forces into Iraq to support specific combat operations there. During 2006 Soldiers of the division's 1st BCT took the lead in making sure Iraqi troops are capable of maintaining their nation's security. The brigade's Task Force 1st Battalion, 37th Armor turned control of battlespace in and around Sinjar and Rabiya, Iraq over to Iraqi forces in a successful transition to an effective Iraqi-led defense of the area. Another 1st BCT unit -- Task Force 2nd 3rd Field Artillery -- followed suit, completing successful validation operations with the 3rd Battalion, 1st Brigade of the 3rd Iraqi Army in May and handing over authority for operations in the Zumar region in June.



TF 2-3's mission was to assess how the Iraqi battalion operated after their training by coalition forces, as well as mentor the unit in its conduct of logistics, communication and staff work.

Developing the Iraqi police was a primary focus of coalition forces, with the Multi-National Force -- Iraq commander designated 2006 "The Year of the Police."

"There is only so much you can hope to accomplish in any deployment, but I firmly believe that we deployed together as a team to throw our shoulders into the massive effort of 'Iraqi security forces in

the lead,' and it will all be up to others to maintain the momentum we have toiled here to create," said LTC Robert Cheatham, commander of the 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery, part of the division's 2nd BCT. Cheatham noted the extensive breadth and scope of the Iraqi mission and said he believes it will take additional rotations of coalition forces working



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together with their Iraqi partners to achieve steady progress. "I can leave here knowing that for every stride forward the ISF has made working with us, we were there to support their advance toward their own

"We stood up the first Iraqi police station that was north of the Euphrates River, on the outskirts of Ramadi," said Sgt. Eric Baker, a 501st squad leader. "One of the biggest issues we worked with was making



victory in Iraq," he said. "The Iraqi security forces are the future of Iraq," said 1st Lt. Larry Steward, a platoon leader with 1st BCT's 2nd Battalion, 37th Armor whose team conducted numerous joint patrol missions with Iraqi army and police forces during 2006. "The way we work with them and treat them on a day-to-day basis will either set them up for success or failure." A clear example of the success of training Iraqi police forces came from Ramadi Province, where Soldiers of the 1st Armored Division's 501st Military Police Company trained hundreds of new Iraqi police officers in spite of repeated outbreaks of sectarian violence during 2006. After surviving the explosion of a 1,000 pound improvised explosive device at an Iraqi police station, 501st Soldier-trainers assigned to train more than 180 Iraqi police trainees were temporarily disrupted in their mission, but the training the Iraqi cops had already received from 501st MPs inspired them to take hold of security on their own while the division troops regrouped from the attack.

sure the IPs were getting paid on a regular basis, but the most significant accomplishment I saw during our interaction with the IPs was when their station was hit with a suicide vehicle-borne IED. "While we were getting our injured Soldiers out of harm's way from the IED attack, the IPs – who were initially intimidated by the dangers in the streets to do patrols while we were training them – actually took the initiative and began to retake control of the streets in their area without our guidance and oversight," Baker recalled. He noted that as a direct result of the IED attack on the IP station, the Iraqis' confidence grew, and they soon expanded their security perimeter beyond their own neighborhood to protect a much larger portion of that district. April 2006 was a challenging month for the division's 1st BCT during operations in the city of Tal' Afar. Enemy combatants sought to take control of the city, but were thwarted by aggressive coalition operations. Relentless offensive operations by 1st BCT troops and

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Iraqi security forces reined in a number of the city's worst terrorists. The "Spartans" of the brigade's 1st Battalion, 36th Infantry achieved critical success as they dismantled an extended terrorist network in the

unnoticed by most people on the ground, but carrying a "flying video camera", the UAV allows the commander on the ground to make tactical decisions more quickly and accurately.

city of Hit and subsequent surrounding villages in the Al Anbar province. The 501st MI Battalion's primary mission was to provide support for commanders and ground troops with unmanned aerial vehicles, effectively saving the lives of Soldiers and adding additional security capability during the Iraqi national elections. New equipment like UAVs also played a key role in Soldier retention. "We had good retainability in the enlisted corps, and I believe this was in part because the new equipment and capabilities showed our troops that the Army is taking care of them and enabling them to survive in a combat zone," said Capt. Scott Leifker, a 501st platoon leader. Troops of the 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, part of the "Dagger Brigade" of 1st Infantry Division attached to 1st Armored Division, also carried UAVs during their patrols in 2006 in support of Task Force Tomahawk. A radio-controlled plane known as a "Raven" appears as a tiny speck in the sky and goes

Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, or "Task Force Gators", reeled in many successes as well during their 2006 deployment. TF Gators deployed to Baghdad during the March national government elections in support of Operation Scales of Justice just 48 hours after receiving the mission. By early May, TF Gators increased its area of operations and began conducting framework operations in the Saydah, Bayaa, Radwaniyah, Risallah, Shurta and A'amel districts of Baghdad, with a total population area of more than 1 million residents. During their eight months of operations in and around Baghdad, TF Gator Soldiers detained more than 150 individuals, many of which were "high-value targets" responsible for planning and executing acts of violence and terrorizing Iraqi civilians. Many of these detainees were captured through house-to-house searches, which also yielded many illegal weapons and explosives used to construct IEDs. "The Task Force Gator troops have been the premier

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IED defeat battalion in Multi-National Division - Baghdad," boasted Col. Michael Beech, commander of the 4th Brigade of the Army's 4th Infantry Division. Troops from the "Big Red One's" 2nd Battalion,

American troops serving in Iraq has improved from basic battlefield tents to hard-formed buildings – an indirect result of the efforts of the U.S.-led coalition in providing security training to Iraqi forces while



12th Cavalry, 2nd BCT, had the task of maintaining security in the western Baghdad suburb of Ghazaliya, the site of much Iraqi sectarian violence throughout 2006 as Sunni insurgents tried to push back the overwhelming Shia population in the northern and eastern areas of Baghdad.

"It's been very, very, crazy here," noted Spc. Craig McBaine of the 2-12th, whose patrol was attacked repeatedly by small arms fire, rocket-propelled grenades and a roadside bomb. McBaine said he often wondered how such a tranquil neighborhood could be the scene of so much carnage.

During Operation Beastmaster in December 2006, a series of three cordon-and-search operations aimed at finding weapons caches in southern Ghazaliya in western Baghdad was conducted. Led by the 2-12th, the operation was highlighted by Iraqi army soldiers rescuing more than 20 kidnapped local nationals, while resulting in no U.S. casualties.

As OIF enters its fourth year, quality of life for the

working with numerous military, governmental and non-governmental organizations and Iraqi contractors to rebuild the nation's infrastructure.

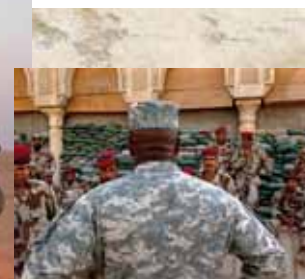
Soldiers of the 40th Engineer Battalion, 412th Civil Affairs Battalion and 354th Civil Affairs Brigade, part of "Task Force Ram" of 1st Armored Division's 2nd BCT, were a key element in those efforts. These and other units provided critical civil affairs support to guide Iraq in the reconstruction of hospitals, schools and other institutions essential for the Iraqi nation's future prosperity.

But the construction efforts were not the only area in which TF Ram troops achieved success. One of the most successful and high-profile projects undertaken by the 2nd BCT was the removal of more than 2,500 tons of trash and debris from the streets of western Baghdad, particularly in Ameriyah, a former stronghold for Saddam loyalists.

Throughout their deployment, 2nd BCT and TF Ram leaders conducted planned weekly meetings with Iraqi

government officials and Iraqi public works engineers. "Most essential to where we are going with Iraq's future is getting an Iraqi face out front," said Lt. Col. William Graham, commander of the 40th. "Engagement

barriers to FOBs and Iraqi police checkpoints that were used to improve those checkpoints and entry control points, and to harden buildings in which coalition troops live.



with local authorities is critical to what we are trying to do here. This interaction is vital to mission success and to the stability and future of Iraq."

The 16th Engineer Battalion of 1st Armored Division's 1st BCT supervised the allocation of over \$7 million in construction projects in Iraq's western Ninewa Province. The main purpose of the joint and combined civil/military operation – called Operation Plowshare – was to develop agriculture, water resources, transportation and the Ninewa economy. The operation resulted in improved health care and education in the city of Tal' Afar, but most its most notable success was in bringing running water to the town of Rabiya.

To provide a supply lifeline to coalition forces' efforts, "Blue Spaders" of 1st Infantry Division's 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry braved Iraq's deadly highways on weekly missions throughout the Baghdad area in support of Task Force 1-26. In addition to delivering supplies to forward operating bases around Baghdad, the "Blue Spaders" also hauled more than 250 large concrete

Keeping morale high was one of the many challenges division chaplains faced while supporting troops in Iraq. To keep their comrades' spirits up in the face of situations that can at times overwhelm even the best Soldiers, chaplains of all faiths worked to help make sense of the bad times.

"We often operate in the flesh, and not in the Spirit," wrote Chaplain (Maj.) Mike Wood, the chaplain for 1st Armored Division's 1st BCT. "To walk by the Spirit is to keep the lines of communication with God open and listen to the 'still, small voice' of the Spirit as we live our lives. Even if you're doing the right thing, you should listen and learn of God's timing and methods. If you don't, you may end up paying consequences for years to come." ■